

Home Readings

Begin at Matthew 9:33 and read to the end of Matthew 10:42; Jer. 1:7-18; Mark 16:14-20; Acts 2:1-12.

Lesson Text

35 And Jesus went about all the cities and the villages, teaching in their synagogues, and preaching the gospel of the kingdom, and healing all manner of diseases and all manner of sickness.

36 But when he saw the multitudes, he was moved with compassion for them, because they were distressed and scattered, as sheep not having a shepherd.

37 Then saith he unto his disciples, The harvest truly is plenteous, but the laborers are few.

38 Pray ye therefore the Lord of the harvest, that he send forth laborers into his harvest.

1 And he called unto him his twelve disciples, and gave them authority over unclean spirits, to cast them out, and to heal all manner of disease and all manner of sickness.

2 Now the names of the twelve apostles are these: The first Simon, who is called Peter, and Andrew his brother: James the son of Alphaeus, and Thaddeus;

4 Simon the Cananaen, and Judas Iscariot, who also betrayed him.

5 These twelve Jesus sent forth, and charged them, saying, Go not into any way of the Gentiles, and enter not into any city of the Samaritans;

6 But go rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel.

7 And as ye preach, saying, The kingdom of heaven is at hand.

8 Heal the sick, raise the dead, cleanse lepers, cast out devils: freely ye received, freely give.

Lesson Links

After the parables by the lake, of the last two lessons, and the performance of several miracles, Jesus began his third preaching tour by sending forth the disciples. The miracles were the stilling of the storm, the healing of the man possessed of a demon at Gerasa, the healing of Jairus' daughter after coming back from Capernaum. Jesus then went to Nazareth where he was rejected a second time. He now sends out his twelve disciples to do his work where he has not time to go.

The Third Preaching Tour

□ How constant was Christ's activity. No wonder with such never ceasing work that he did more in his short ministry of three and one half years than any of us do in a long life-time. He went about all the cities and villages of that immediate part of Galilee, and taught in their synagogues and healed all kinds of sickness and disease among the people. The suffering of the people was great and Jesus touched with compassion, even for their physical wants gladly relieved them. O, that we had the faith of Jesus today, that we might by his power alleviate the sufferings of the people!

The Compassionate Christ

But it was not only the diseases and sicknesses of the people that moved Him to compassion, but their moral condition,—“they fainted, and were scattered abroad as sheep having no shepherd.” O, how would the heart of Christ ache today over the same sad condition. The people are in distress and know not or will not know that Christ cares for them. Preachers, S. S. teachers and Christians should have the compassion

and sympathy of Christ for the fainting and scattered souls. Many a hard exterior is only the shield from an unfeeling world for an aching heart. Men's hearts cry out for that which only Christ can bring. Let us bear it to them.

The Harvest

As Jesus saw it all, knowing the heart's craving love and sympathy and God beneath the unseemly exterior, he said: “The harvest truly is plenteous,”—note the word, “but the laborers are few. Pray ye, therefore, the Lord of the harvest that he send forth laborers into his harvest.” It is true yet today. Thousands of men and women not attending church and Sunday school; many of them without such privileges in our cities and in isolated country districts. Are we doing our best to bring them within reach of these institutions and within the fold of Christ?

The Sending of the Twelve

For Jesus to see a need was for him to endeavor to supply it. At once he called the twelve to himself, gave them authority over unclean spirits and to heal all manner of disease and sent them out. It seems they did not have this power before. Jesus gave it to them. How, we are not told. But it must have been a matter of faith with them. Jesus has given unto his people today power also. Sometimes, the trouble with us is, we do not believe he has given us power. No one ought to take unwarranted power. But every child of God should use all the authority and power which Jesus has committed unto him.

The Grouping of the Twelve

You will notice that in sending out both the twelve and later the seventy, Jesus sent them forth by twos. Why? We believe it was in order that the weaknesses of the one should be supplied by the strong points of the other. Simon Peter, the impetuous, but easily daunted man was sent with Andrew, the steady, personal worker persevering and never discouraged. James, the oldest of the apostles with John the youngest. Philip, the man of slow perception with Bartholomew, or Nathanael, as he was also called, the quick and brilliant man. Thomas, the doubter with Matthew the man of firm faith and unshaken loyalty. James the son of Alphaeus, the practical man with Lebbaeus Thaddeus, or Jude, the theologian. Simon, the fiery zeal of Galilee, with Judas, who finally betrayed Jesus. Each was the complement of the other with whom he was grouped.

Their Commission

This preaching tour was to be strictly confined to the people of Israel. No Samaritan or Gentile cities or countries were to be visited. Jesus would give his own nation the first chance. He would not excite their prejudice by neglecting them to bring the glad message to those whom they had been taught, tho falsely, to believe had no hope of salvation. The “lost sheep of the house

of Israel” were to be attended to first. With them they would have abundant labor, for Josephus tells us that Galilee contained at that time 204 cities of not less than 15000 inhabitants each. We should learn from this that we should begin our work of evangelization at home. Only let us not stop there.

Their Message

Was “The Kingdom of Heaven is at hand.” By the “Kingdom of Heaven,” Jesus doubtless meant not the church, nor the apostles, nor any visible organization, but the rule in human lives and society of the laws of heaven,—of God's will,—under Jesus Christ as King,—the doing of God's will on earth as it is in heaven. No message has been found more fundamental and with more of suggestiveness in it than this of Jesus and his apostles. It involves everything connected with salvation,—repentance, faith, baptism, an organized church, and also judgment.

What They Were to Do

But these apostles were not only to preach; like Jesus, they were to *do*. Preaching or teaching or learning without *doing* is in vain. They were to heal the sick; cleanse the lepers; raise the dead; cast out demons. They were to give as freely as He had given them. They were to depend on charity for their support. They were to take no “script,” or wallet in which it was customary to take some victuals for future need. They were to take no extra clothing, wear only sandals instead of shoes, nor were they to carry a staff. From all these it can easily be seen that they were to hasten. When Jesus sent them out the last time he changed all this. (See Luke 22:35, 36.) It was probably of short duration, not longer than two weeks. But how many people learned of the kingdom and the King thru these apostles, no one knows, but doubtless very many. We know that the apostles came back rejoicing that demons were subject to them and Jesus commanded them rather to rejoice that their names were written in heaven.

Lesson Applied

1. The teacher or preacher that does not get out among the people cannot succeed the best.
2. Christians can often serve Christ in helping people's physical distresses.
3. Many who weep over people's physical sickness are not moved, like Jesus, by the spiritual lack of people.
4. Jesus sees beneath the surface. It will be well if we can see, beneath the hard exterior, the harsh laugh, the aching sin-weary heart.
5. We need more prayer for laborers. Our church is in need of these.
6. Jesus is the source of all power for good.
7. Remember your mission is to bless somebody else.
8. The workman is worthy of and shall get his reward.

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